



Hello all,

Welcome to *Matrika - The Source of Internal Dialogue*. Originally published in August 2010, I pull this article “from the archives” and revise it for *Swan & Stone*. Personally, I consider it one of my most important writings.

The article is about our “inner voice” and the critical part it plays in our health, happiness, and psychophysiological well-being. Our inner voice is a function of mind, and as such is a very important aspect of thinking, problem solving, creativity, and human existence as we know it. However, our inner voice is also the primary tool of negative rumination and in this capacity may be involved in reinforcing fears and anxieties. A wound up, unruly internal dialogue generates mental tension and its correlate - physical tension - and its correlate - mental tension, a circular affair that goes on and on winding us up like a spring. It can be extremely deleterious to our health and well-being.

Many I’ve spoken with accept that our inner voice is beyond our conscious control - but it isn’t. Learning to control it is a cornerstone of the yogic pursuit where the mind and its inner dialog have been likened to a wild animal that only needs taming. Meditation is considered to be the primary means for accomplishing this, but I believe it to be simpler than that. Interestingly, our inner voice and the power it has over us is highly related to our autonomic state and its outcome, bodily tension. Physically, our inner voice relates to the tongue, the muscular organ of our anatomy that is involved in speech and articulation. Our inner dialogue energizes the tongue. When our inner dialogue becomes outer dialogue, our tongue begins to function in order to speak, articulating words and language. Let’s look at the mechanics of it:

Thought -> The tongue is energized -> Words are articulated.

However, if words are not articulated and our dialogue remains “internal” the mechanics are:

Thought -> The tongue is energized -> Rumination is internal.

“Thought” is the impetus, the tongue follows. Now, here is the magic: the tongue is a *bridge* which in the parlance means that while thought can affect the tongue, the tongue can also affect thought. This is the significance of *bridges*, they are bi-directional gateways via which we can consciously control functions that are otherwise subconscious. In the case of the tongue, by relaxing it, we can affect both activation of the tongue, and behind that, the thought that results in activation of the tongue. Allow me to explain...

As I write this, words “come to mind”, the mind through language, transforming thoughts into words, words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, and paragraphs into the thesis of this article. Of course there is nothing unusual about this as we all use this fundamental human capacity each and every time we communicate, whether written or spoken. One might even argue that in time, language becomes the very basis of thought, whether one of letters, numbers, signs, or symbols.

Language and its relationship with the human psyche is an age old concern, possibly as old as language itself. Barely enough can be said of the importance of language and its impact on civilization as we know it. But language also has a downside. Samkhya, the ancient philosophy of India, considered language to be *imprisoning*, literally separating us from the *true reality*. To appreciate this idea, let’s stop and consider *for a moment*, life without words...life without language. What might this life be like? Would the mind know what to do without words? Yoga answers this question by asking: “As we listen to our internal dialog, what exists in between words?” Yoga answers this question: “The stillness and purity of the spirit”. It is the mind that is agitated and impure.

मातृक *mâtri-ka*, *a.* coming or inherited from a mother; maternal; *m.* maternal uncle; **क**, *f.* mother; grandmother; letter written in a diagram and supposed to have a magical power: coll. the letters or alphabet thus used; alphabet: **-maya**, *a.* (î) consisting of mystical letters; **-garbha**, *m.* womb: *Matrika*: mother, mystical letters
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In the ancient yogic tradition, language is said to be *the source of delusion* - where the root cause of delusion is “objectification” of the world and its phenomena versus feeling, seeing, experiencing, and knowing the world *as whole*. When our minds assign names and definitions to phenomena we turn those phenomena into *objects*, lifting them out of the natural panorama in which they exist, ultimately creating a disintegrated world view, this understanding of the cosmos as a set of objects taking us further and further away from what the ancients considered *the true reality* - that the Cosmos, Shiva, Tao, God, are *whole*, and that we are an integral part of this wholeness. In Kashmiri Shaivism this is the definition of enlightenment. The final delusion is that we eventually come to understand the world as a set of unrelated material objects and entirely forget that there is or ever was a greater whole.



Shiva (leftmost) with the Saptamatrikas

Our internal dialogue is a reminder of the *magical* power that words and language have over us. For many of us it is omnipresent and often seems to have a mind of its own. In Sanskrit, this magical power is referred to as “matrika”, matrika also meaning “mother”. Hindu lore identifies seven mothers, the Saptamatrikas Brahmani, Vaishnavi, Maheshvari, Indrani, Kaumari, Varahi and Chamundam, each being associated with a vowel of the Devanagari alphabet (Ka), (Cha), (Ta), (ta), (Pa), (Ya) and (Ksha). Through their association with the vowels, the Saptamatrikas preside over the delusion wrought on mankind by the magic of letters, words, language, and objectification. “Maya” means “alphabet”. Maya also means “duality and delusion”, the alphabet being its source.

Yoga scripture says that we can free ourselves from this delusion, once again finding and experiencing the world as whole - with this perception coming a fundamental shift in consciousness and resultant realization. To do so, we must *find the source of the matrika*, i.e. the place in us where words arise. This sounds mysterious but it isn't. Let me show you how its done...

HOUSE

53



Above are a word, a number, and a picture. First look at the word “HOUSE”. The auto-response is to read the word (if we don't read it how are we to know what it says :) Now look at the word HOUSE again, this time with the objective of suspending the auto-response to read it. Can you look at it without reading it? This is a good test of the power that the Saptamatrikas have over us.

When I first started practicing this, I had to suppress the urge to read it. But in so doing, I was able to discover the source of the urge. The urge is manifested by the tongue (a bridge), which wants to verbalize. If you stop the tongue from actually verbalizing, you'll feel that the tongue is energized and activated in preparation to verbalize. To find the source of the matrika, we want to find the source of this activation and consciously relax it. This is done by finding and relaxing the *root* of the tongue. It isn't difficult but it may require a few attempts in order to discover the source. Try it with “53” and “rabbit”. When you are able to observe without verbalizing, do you notice a shift in consciousness?

Another way to experience the shift is to pretend...First, choose an object, any object, maybe a “teacup” as I am doing now. Consider the object for a moment. Now, without much effort or consternation, assume for a moment that the object of inquiry has no name, no definition, and you know nothing of it. Does your perception change, even for the briefest of moments?

Do children know of separation and duality? I don't think so. I believe that young children naturally experience the world as whole, but as they are educated, objectification begins and in time, the delusion of disintegration (duality) naturally follows. Think back to when you were a child, isn't this how you remember perceiving the world? Somewhere along the way, things changed, and as they did



joy and awe were gradually replaced by objectification. But it doesn't have to be this way. Instead of allowing language and its myriad independent objects to have its way with us, we can balance its magical power with a power of our own. The way we accomplish this is by discovering how to govern our inner dialog, thereby breaking the Saptamatrika's spell over us. This is done gradually, but with daily practice one can bring the internal dialog completely under one's conscious control. This includes the ability to:

- 1) simply allow the mind to persist in a neutral state, i.e. no dialog,
- 2) allowing desirable dialog, and
- 3) disallowing undesirable dialog.

With these faculties, we are able to control what and when we "think". And with this ability, we enjoy a shift in consciousness - the feeling of separateness between us and objects dissolves and we perceive phenomena in their natural panoramic context - of which we are part! "Duality" ends.

To recap, the goal of this practice is simply to learn to *observe* the world around us without reading, verbalizing, or commenting (unless we wish to). In other words, we want to thwart the auto-response. This specifically includes letters, words, numbers, signs, and symbols but ultimately extends to all worldly phenomena.

We accomplish this by *finding the source of the matrika*, by finding the place inside us where words begin to arise, and by relaxing it away.

The source resides at the root of the tongue.

Thank you all for your interest and consideration.

Stephen Elliott, President, COHERENCE LLC

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